

Crash Course in Innovation



Many of you probably read Wired (<http://www.wiredmag.com>), a stimulating innovation publication. Every once in a while, they condense knowledge down in a very useful way that begs for the pages to be torn out, kept, and gotten back out once in a while. In the May, 2004 issue (p68) Chris Anderson, their editor, published a one pager entitled "A Crash Course in Innovation". Let's take a look at the four points that must be matched in order to have a successful commercial innovation.

1. Technology collides with a critical price. This is what allows mass acceptance and is usually seen in the early phases of the manufacturing learning curve when economies of scale kick in. VCR's, microwave ovens, and computers are all examples here (does anyone remember paying \$499 for a Radio Shack computer that only ran small floppy disks? I do!)
2. Technology hits critical mass. This is a natural consequence of hitting #1, so that sales rise, and as Chris put it, people stop reading about a technology and go out and buy it. 10-20% of household penetration is stated as the magic point here.
3. Displacement happens. The collision of accomplishing #1 and #2 enables a technology on the way up to hit one on the way down (LCD's vs. CRT's, broadband vs. dial up are cited as examples)
4. Last but not least, collision with zero, meaning commodities mature and their price approaches zero (a megabit of storage--I just purchased an 8MB flash drive for \$20). Think about carrying 10,000 songs in your pocket vs. cases of records! Wi-Fi becomes ubiquitous and is built into everything.

Obviously, many of the TRIZ tools can be included in the thinking that goes along with all these, from lines of evolution that predict discontinuities, contradiction resolution enabling breakthroughs, and widespread resource utilization to enable technology acceptance and utilization.

You may want to put down your latest 500 page books on innovation from a graduate professor and just think about these 4 items for strategic thinking from a magazine editor.

Events:

American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the American Institute of Chemical Engineers

Introduction to TRIZ

October 6-8 Chicago, IL

<http://calendar.asme.org/EventDetail.cfm?EventID=5323>

Mexican TRIZ Association meeting

Guadalajara, Mexico Oct 15-17

<http://www.mtriz.mx>

Innovation Convergence Conference

October 20-22 Wigwam Resort Phoenix, AZ